39. The method of claim 36 further comprising the step of initiating a call back to the system user at the selected time via the selected mode of communication.

40. The method of claim 39 wherein the selected modes of communication include at least one of: audio communication, video communication, and data communication.

41. The method of claim 36 further comprising the step of generating a presenting a supervisor interface which includes at least one of: current status of the agents connected to the network and profile of one or more of the agent.

42. The method of claim 41 further comprising the step of editing the agent profile based on input received through the supervisor interface.

43. The method of claim 41 further including the step of generating and presenting a screen display for viewing the profile information for the system user waiting in the queue.

REMARKS

Claims 1-8, 10, 11, 13-21, and 23-27 are pending in the present application. Claims 1-8, 10, 11, 13-21, and 23-27 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 102(a). By this amendment, the Applicant has deleted Claims 1-8, 10, 11, 13-21, and 23-27. By this amendment, Claims 28-43 are added.

In the Final rejection dated September 11, 2002 the Examiner rejected Claims 1-8, 10, 11, 13-21, and 23-27 over U.S. Patent No. 5,848,143 (Andrews et al.) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,212,178 (Beck et al.). Although the Applicant has deleted the above noted claims, this Response will address any possible rejection, which may be issued using art previously cited by the Examiner.

The Applicant's invention as recited in the claims is an automated customer service

system and method which is configured to present to a system user connecting over a communications network using a web-browser, a series of interactive displays through which a system user may enter information and connect with a service agent. Included is an identification screen display through which a system user may enter identification information in order to initiate a session. Further, a communications mode screen display may be presented through which a system user may select a desired mode of communication from a plurality of modes. If it is determined that an agent is not available to establish a real time line of communication with a system user, a system user may then be presented with a choice of entering a queue or receiving a call back. In the situation where a call back is selected, a display may be presented where a system user may select a desired mode of communication for the call back as well as a desired time. If a system user wishes to wait in a queue, a call status display may be presented through which waiting information such as position and the queue and time until an agent will be available is presented.

Andrews et al. discloses a communication system which automatically makes telephone routing decisions with "global authority" based upon information gathered in real time from that communication system. Included in Andrews et al. is a monitoring means, which is configured to monitor the various elements of the system to determine whether these elements are functioning properly. The system is further adapted to generate control signals based upon status messages received from the agent's system, requesting service data from the network and optimization parameters.

Beck et al. discloses a multimedia telecommunications center, which system users may access over the Internet. Through various displays presented to system users, various options may be selected depending on whether the user is a new customer or an existing customer.

Further, displays are presented for automated product ordering as well as establishment of a line of communications with a customer service agent.

The Applicant's invention is not obvious in light of the references cited by the Examiner because the references neither alone, or in combination, teach or suggest the use of the interactive displays described in the Applicant's invention as well as the processes performed in response to the information entered into the displays. Specifically, the applicant's invention teaches the use of a display which provides for selection of a call back time and a mode of communication as well as the automated periodic search for this information and the scheduling of call back with a service agent. Further, the display presented while waiting in the queue presents status information such as time till help is provided and position in the queue. Also while this display is being presented, a system user may select to visit another location in a communications network.

Conversely, while the Beck et al. reference does provide a general teaching as to the use of screen displays for attempting to establish a line of communication, requesting a call back, and being placed in a queue, this reference those not teach or suggest the additional functionality such as automated timed call back through a selected mode of communication as is taught in the Applicant's invention. Still further, in the Applicant's invention it is now described in detail that when a system user wishes to receive a call back, a number of options are provided for the mode of communication for the call back as well as the time the call back will occur. Because the Applicant's invention only deals with real time lines of communication (whereas in Beck et al. e-mail and fax options are included in the call selection) the time the call back will occur is critical in employing a successful customer service system.

With regard to Andrews et al., this reference is more directed towards the overall control

of a customer service center and provides no teaching or suggestion of the types of tools or devices which the system may use in connecting a system user with a service agent. Specifically, there is no teaching or suggestion of the use of interactive displays or actions performed in response to information entered into a display.

With regards to the queue function described in the Applicant's invention, Andrews et al. does not mention the use of a queue function. Beck et al. merely suggest that waiting in a queue is an option. There is no teaching or suggestions about how such a queue would work or what information, if any, would be presented to a system user while waiting in the queue. As such, a combination of Beck et al. and Andrews et al. would not teach the use of the type of front end displays disclosed in the Applicant's invention for receiving information from a system user and then the performance of various processes in response thereto. As such, any rejection by the Examiner under 35 U.S.C. Section 103(a) would be respectfully traversed.

Based upon the foregoing, Applicants believe that all pending claims are in condition for allowance and such disposition is respectfully requested. In the event that a telephone conversation would further prosecution and/or expedite allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: February 11, 2003

REDLINED CLAIMS

Please delete claims 1-8, 10, 11, 13-21 and 23-27

Please add the following claims:

28. An automated customer service system for establishing a line of communication with a system user and a selected customer service agent according to a selected mode of communication comprising:

a processing device in connection with a communications device wherein the processing device is configured to present a plurality of interactive screen displays the system user connecting with the processing device using a web browser, the plurality of interactive screen displays including:

an identification screen display configured for the system user to enter identification information;

a communications mode screen display which present a plurality of modes of communication each of which are selectable by the system user in order to establish real time connection with an identified service agent by the selected mode of communication; and

a call status display which is presentable to the system user who has selected to wait in a queue, wherein the call status display provides wait time information for the system user as well as at least one alternative system user activity which includes at least one of: visiting at least one website and providing call back information which includes the selected mode of communication; and

a call back display configured so that the system user may select from the plurality of modes of communication for a call back as well as a preferred time for the

call back; and

said processing device being further configured to store the preferred time for the call back and the selected mode of communication for the call back in memory and to periodically search the memory and automatically schedule the call back with an identified service agent.

29. The system of claim 28 further including a service agent display which is presentable to the system user wherein the service agent display includes profile information for the identified service agent.

30. The system of claim 28 further including a supervisor interface through which at least one of may be performed: the agent status may be viewed, agent profile information may be viewed, and the agent profile information may be edited.

31. The system of claim 28 wherein the plurality of mode of communication include at least one of: audio communication, video communication, and data communication.

32. The system of claim 28 wherein the call status display further include position information in the queue for the system user.

33. The system of claim 28 wherein the agent status includes at least one of: agents currently active, identification information for connections in the queue, change of agent status.

34. The system of claim 28 further including a screen display for viewing the profile information for the system user waiting in the queue.

35. The system of claim 34 wherein the communications network is at least one of: the World Wide Web and the public switched telephone network.

36. A method of establishing a line of communication between a system user and a service agent comprising the step of:

presenting an identification screen display to system user that connects over a

communications network using a web browser, said identification screen display being configured for the system user to enter identification information;

upon receipt of the identification information, presenting a communications mode screen display which present a plurality of modes of communication each of which are selectable by the system user in order to establish real time connection with an identified service agent by the selected mode of communication;

detecting selection of one of the modes of communication and automatically determining whether one of the agents is free to receive a communication from the system user, and if one of the service agents is free establishing a line of communication according to the selected mode of communication;

if one of the service agents is not available, presenting a screen display to the system user indicating whether of the service agents is free and if the system user wishes a call back or to be placed in a queue;

if the system user selects to be placed in a queue, presenting a call status display which displays at least one of: wait time information for the system user and queue position information for the system user;

if the system user wishes a call back, presenting a call back display configured so that the system user may select a mode of communication for a call back as well as a preferred time for the call back and storing; and

storing in memory the selected call back time and mode of communication and periodically searching the memory to retrieve the stored information and automatically scheduling a call back to the system user using the selected mode of communication.

37. The method of claim 36 further comprising the step of presenting a profile display

to the system user for the agent to which the system user has been connected.

38. The method of claim 36 wherein the modes of communication includes at least one of: audio communication, video communication, and data communication.

39. The method of claim 36 further comprising the step of initiating a call back to the system user at the selected time via the selected mode of communication.

40. The method of claim 39 wherein the selected modes of communication include at least one of: audio communication, video communication, and data communication.

41. The method of claim 36 further comprising the step of generating a presenting a supervisor interface which includes at least one of: current status of the agents connected to the network and profile of one or more of the agent.

42. The method of claim 41 further comprising the step of editing the agent profile based on input received through the supervisor interface.

43. The method of claim 41 further including the step of generating and presenting a screen display for viewing the profile information for the system user waiting in the queue.